

Another Sea-Dyak Legend.*

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“TWO SEA-DYAK LEGENDS.”

BY THE REVD. EDWIN H. GOMES, M.A.

PULANG-GANA

And how he came to be worshipped as the God of the Earth.

Long, long ago, though the Dyaks knew of paddy and planted it every year, yet they had very poor crops because they did not know who was the god that owned the land, and as they did not offer him sacrifices, he did nothing to help them. In those days there lived together seven brothers and their only sister. Their names were *Bui-Nasi*, *Belang Pinggang*, *Bejit-Manai*, *Bunga-Jawa*, *Litan-Dai*, *Kenyawang*, and *Pulang-Gana*, and the sister's name was *Puchong-Kompat*. They lived on a hill by the side of a broad river. On all sides were wide plains, and beyond these were high hills rising in the distance. Most of these were covered with thick jungle; only a few clearings could be seen where paddy had been planted.

Not far from their house the brothers had a garden, in which they planted potatoes, yams, sugar, cane and tapioca; but a porcupine used often to come at night and do much damage to this garden. Their youngest brother *Pulang-Gana* was told to keep watch at night, and drive away the animal or kill it if he could. But all his efforts were vain. When he was awake the animal did not come, but as soon as he fell asleep the porcupine would creep in quietly and eat up the potatoes and yams. The elder brothers were not kind to *Pulang-Gana*. They would not keep watch themselves, but whenever they saw any fresh damage done, then they not only scolded their younger brother but beat him with sticks.

"He is only lazy," they said, "he deserves a thrashing; he does nothing but sleep and is too lazy to wake up at night and drive the porcupine away!"

Poor *Pulang-Gana*! His was a hard lot indeed!

He determined to keep careful watch one night, and whatever it cost him, to kill the porcupine, so that his brothers might have no more cause for blaming him. That night he did not sleep at all. The porcupine came just before dawn when all was very still. *Pulang-Gana* was awake, and went after it, determined to kill it. The animal ran away and *Pulang-Gana* followed. The moon was shining brightly and he had no difficulty in seeing in what direction it went. Every now and then the porcupine stopped, but as soon as *Pulang-Gana* came close to it, it started off again and he was not able to kill it. So the animal went on and *Pulang-Gana* followed. He was determined not to give up the chase until he had killed the animal that had been the cause of his being scolded and beaten so often.

The sun was beginning to rise in the East and still *Pulang-Gana* pursued the porcupine.

"Sooner or later," he said to himself, "I must catch it up. The animal is already tired. I will not return home till I have killed it."

The porcupine now came to the foot of a rocky mountain. *Pulang-Gana* thought the chase would soon be over and he hurried on. But before he could come up to the animal it made its escape into an opening in the solid rock. The cave into which it had disappeared was large enough for a man to stand upright in, and *Pulang-Gana* said to himself:

"Now I have you; wait till I have a light to show me where you are, and then I will come in and kill you."

He collected some dry branches and tied them together for a torch. He found a piece of dry soft wood, and also a short stick of some hard wood the point of which he sharpened. With the palms of his hands he worked the small stick and drilled a hole in the soft wood. Soon it began to smoke, and with the aid of some dry twigs he blew the fire into a blaze; then he lighted his torch, and hurried into the cave after the porcupine.

He saw the animal a little distance ahead of him and followed it leisurely. There was no need for haste, as he would be able to kill it easily enough when he drove it to the end of the cave and it had no means of escape. The cave seemed to extend a great way into the mountain. After a few hours walking *Pulang-Gana* was surprised to come to an opening in the rock through which the porcupine had evidently escaped. Outside the sun was shining brightly. *Pulang-Gana* went through this opening, but though he looked in all directions he could see no signs of the porcupine.

He was uncertain what he ought to do next. The porcupine had escaped and there was no chance of his being able to kill it. He did not feel inclined to return to his brothers because they were all unkind to him. On the other hand, he did not know if this new country in which he found himself was inhabited, and if inhabited, whether the people would treat him kindly. He looked around and saw smoke arising some distance off, and guessed that there was a Dyak house there. As he was hungry he decided to go to it hoping that the inmates would be kind to him and give him food.

As *Pulang-Gana* came nearer he saw that the house was a very long one inhabited by about one hundred families. He stopped at the bottom of the ladder leading up to the house, and following the Dyak custom, asked in a loud voice if he might walk up.

"Yes, come up *Pulang-Gana*," said some one in reply. "We have been expecting you for some time and will be glad to see you."

He was surprised that his name should be known in this strange country in which he had never been before. He walked up and in the long open room stretching the whole length of the house, he saw an old man and a young and beautiful girl.

"Spread out a mat, my daughter," the old man said, "that *Pulang-Gana* may sit and rest after his long journey, and you can prepare some food for him, no doubt he is hungry as well as tired."

She spread out a mat for *Pulang-Gana* and then went into the room to get ready a meal for their visitor. Soon after she opened the door of the room and asked him to come in and eat.

The old man who seemed kind and hospitable said to him :

"Go in and have some food. You must be hungry after your long journey. When you have eaten and rested, we can have a talk together. I have long wished to meet you and to ask you about yourself and your brothers, and how affairs are in your country."

Pulang-Gana went into the room and found a nice meal awaiting him. Being very hungry, he did full justice to it.

That evening as they sat by the fire, the old man asked him about his people and if they had good crops of paddy in his country. *Pulang-Gana* said in reply that though his brothers possessed the largest paddy fields in the country, still he never remembered their having a really good harvest. The paddy they obtained was not sufficient to last them the whole year, and they had to fall back on potatoes and sago for food. The old man seemed interested in what *Pulang-Gana* said of himself, and *Pulang-Gana* went on and told him of all his circumstances, how he lived with his six brothers and only sister and how unkind his brothers were to him. He told the old man also about the porcupine which did such damage to their garden, and how often he had been scolded and beaten by his brothers for not being able to drive away or kill the animal. He gave an account of his adventures that morning, how determining to kill the porcupine, he had followed it through the under-ground passage through the mountain and had found himself in this strange country.

"I have heard your story," said the hold man, "and think you are very much to be pitied. Your brothers seem to have been very unkind and to have treated you very badly. I would like you to stay with me here, and not return to them. I have no son, and would like you to marry my daughter and live with us. I am getting old and am not so strong as I used to be and will be glad of your help."

"I should like to stay with you very much, for you seem so kind, and are so different to my brothers, and I should like to marry your daughter and spend the rest of my life here. But there is no one to look after our garden, and the porcupine will do much damage to it. And my brothers are sure to be angry with me for leaving them, and when they see their garden destroyed through my neglect, they are sure to hunt for me and when they find me they will probably kill me. No; much as I would like to stay, I am afraid I cannot. I must start to return to-morrow. It would have been different if I had succeeded in killing the porcupine, then it would not matter so much if I stayed away some time."

"You need not trouble yourself about the animal that attacks the vegetables planted in your garden. I can prevent its coming again. That porcupine is not really an animal. One of our slaves here, named *Indai-Antok-Genok*, is commanded by me to transform herself into a porcupine and pay visits to that garden. I shall tell her to do so no more, and your brothers' garden will be safe enough without you to watch it. You must remain here with us. There is nothing for you to fear. If you do not return your brothers will think that some accident has happened to you and that you are dead. As they are all so unkind to you, you may be sure they will not trouble to look for you."

"Well, if that be the case, I will gladly live with you. I was not happy with my brothers and I am sure I shall be happy here."

So it was decided that *Pulang-Gana* should remain in the house of the old man. Some months afterwards he married the daughter and they lived happily as husband and wife. His wife's father and mother were kind to him and so were the other people in the house, and *Pulang-Gana* was very glad he decided to cast in his lot with them.

Now this old man who treated *Pulang-Gana* so kindly was no ordinary mortal. His name was *Raja Shua* and he ruled the spirits who live in the under-ground caves of the earth. His wife was quite as powerful as he. She was a goddess and

had power over the animals of the forest, all of which obeyed her. She was known as *Seregendah*. The daughter that married *Pulang-Gana* was called *Trentom-Tanah-Tumboh* and sometimes *Setanggoi-Tanggoi-Buloh*. It was from his father-in-law and his wife *Seregendah* that *Pulang-Gana* received power over the land.

In process of time *Pulang-Gana's* wife gave birth to a girl, who was very much admired by all, and greatly loved by her parents.

When the child was a few years old, one day she came to her father and mother and asked them what property they intended to leave her. The mother showed her the valuable jars and brassware that she possessed, all of which were to belong to her child. Then the little girl asked her father what he had to give her. *Pulang-Gana* had no property to leave to his daughter. Years ago he had come by chance to this house of *Rajah Shua* bringing nothing with him, and unless his brothers gave him a share of their father's property, he would have nothing to leave his daughter. So he told her to be content with what her mother gave her. She would be very rich without anything from him. But she was not satisfied with this reply, and cried because her father said he had nothing to give her.

When *Pulang-Gana* saw how sad his child was, he said to his father-in-law that he would like to pay a visit to his brothers and ask them for a share of the property, that he might have something to give his daughter. *Rajah Shua* told him he might go to them but warned him that probably he would not have a kind reception, and advised him not to be away long but to return as soon as possible.

Pulang-Gana started on his journey to his old home, wondering how his brothers would receive him after his long absence. He had no difficulty in finding his way as his father-in-law gave him very definite instructions about his journey. He found that his brothers had built a new house not far from the site of the old one in which he had lived with them years ago. The house seemed very quiet and he found that nearly all the

people were away on a fishing expedition. Only his sister-in-law, the wife of his brother *Belang Pinggang*, was at home.

She was very much surprised to see him, and said they had given him up for dead long ago. She told him that the others were away fishing, and that his brother *Bui-Nasi*, and a little boy, besides herself, were the only ones left at home. He would find his brother and the little boy working at the forge making some implements for their work.

Pulang-Gana said he would go to his brother and he left the house and walked in the direction where he guessed the forge was from the sound of hammering he heard.

"Oh! Is that you *Pulang-Gana*?" said *Bui-Nasi* as soon as he saw him. "Where have you been all these years? We thought that you had met with some accident and had died long ago."

Pulang-Gana said little about himself to his brother. He told him how he had lost his way in the jungle years ago, and when he arrived at last at a house, the people there persuaded him to stay with them, and he said that he was now married and had a daughter.

"Have you come with your wife to stay with us?" asked *Bui-Nasi*.

"No," was the answer, "I have only come on a short visit by myself to ask for my share of the property left us by our father."

"You have nothing whatever to expect. You left us years ago of your own will and have been away all this time, and now you have the impudence to come and ask for your share of the property. I advise you to say nothing of this to the others. They will be very vexed with you if you do."

"I do not ask for much," said *Pulang-Gana*. "I will be satisfied with little. But my daughter asked me what I had to give her, so I came here to ask for something, and I should be sorry to return empty-handed."

"You shall not return empty-handed," said *Bui-Nasi* in scorn. "Here is something for you to take back with you. If is all that you will get from us, I can tell you." With these

words he threw *Pulang-Gana* a clod of earth which he saw lying near. Now go away, and do not let us see your face again."

Pulang-Gana put the lump of earth in his bag, and with a heavy heart, started to return to his house. So this was the way his brothers treated him! There was nothing to expect from them!

When he arrived at his house all the family gathered round him. They had heard that he had gone to ask his brothers for his share of the property and they were anxious to see what he brought back. His little daughter rushed up eagerly to him and said:

"Father what have you brought back for me from my uncles? Let me see the nice things they gave you."

Then *Pulang-Gana* said sadly, "I received no share of the property from your uncles. They would have nothing to do with me, and drove me away."

"But did you get nothing at all from them?" asked his father-in-law.

"Yes," said *Pulang-Gana*, "my brother *Bui-Nasi* did give me something, but I am ashamed to tell you what it is. Here it is," and he took out from his bag the lump of earth his brother had given him, and handed it to his father-in-law.

When *Rajah Shua* saw what it was that *Pulang-Gana* had received from his brothers, he said joyfully:

"They have given you the most valuable gift it is possible to imagine. You are now a person of great importance. The earth is yours. Whoever wishes to plant on it must first make offerings and sacrifices to you and pray to you to give him a good harvest. It is in your power to make the earth fruitful or barren, and to give mankind a good or a bad harvest as you will."

A few months after, the brothers of *Pulang-Gana* at the advice of *Bai-Nasi* decided on the site where they were to plant paddy that year. It was a large forest some distance away from their house. First they cut down the smaller trees, and then they felled the large trees, and when all this work was done, they rested for some weeks, waiting for the sun to dry up

the timber so that it might be set on fire and the land be ready for planting on.

One day *Pulang-Gana*'s father-in-law said to him, "I hear that your brothers have been busy cutting down the trees where they intend to plant paddy this year. As they gave you the earth some time ago to be your share of the property, it is only right that they should ask leave from you before planting on it. Since they have not done so, you must stop them from planting paddy there."

"How can I prevent them planting paddy where they like?" said *Pulang-Gana* in dismay. "Is it likely that they will take any notice of anything I say?"

"Yes," said his father-in-law, *Raja Shua*, "they will have to listen to what you say, for I will be on your side and will help you. I am the god that rules the spirits that live in the underground caves of the earth, and my wife *Seregendah* has power over the animals and the spirits which inhabit the forests. As your brothers have treated you so unkindly, and have given you no share of the property, and have simply given you a clod of earth to take back with you, my wife and I will punish them and reward you by giving you power over everything that grows on the earth. Before the land is planted upon, offerings must be made to you, and invocations must be made to yourself and myself and my wife *Seregendah*. Unless these things be done, the ground will not be fruitful.

"As your brothers have not done anything of the kind, you must teach them a lesson and prevent them from going on with their work. This evening at dusk you must go to the newly cleared forest and cry aloud: 'Come here all you who are the servants of *Seregendah* and *Raja Shua*,' and name all the wild beasts of the forest. They will come to you in large numbers. Then you must ask them, as well as the invisible spirits, who will be present too, to help you and put up all the trees that have been cut down."

And *Pulang-Gana* did as his father-in-law advised him. He went at dusk to the part of the jungle where his brothers had been cutting down the trees and called to the animals in

the name of *Rajah Shua* and of *Seregendah*, and they came in large numbers and helped him to put up all the trees that had been felled, and the forest appeared just as it had been before any of the trees had been cut down.

The next day *Bui-Nasi* went early in the morning to see if the fish traps he had set in the stream had caught any fish, and as he was near the part of the forest where the trees had been cut down by his brothers and himself not long before, he went on to see how things were getting on and if the felled jungle was dry enough to be burnt.

To his great surprise he found all the trees standing, and no signs of the clearing that had been made! He hurried home and told his brothers what he had seen, and they all returned, accompanied by their friends and followers, and found that what *Bui-Nasi* had told them was perfectly true. They were all very much surprised as they had never known such a thing happen before.

"I wonder if this is really the part of the forest which we cleared a few weeks ago," said one of the brothers. "Perhaps we have mistaken the spot."

"No," said *Bui-Nasi* in reply, "there is no mistake. Here are the whetstones on which we sharpened our axes and choppers; and here too is where we did our cooking for our mid-day meal."

They held a consultation as to what was to be done.

"This is very strange," said *Bui-Nasi*. "Some enemy who is helped by powerful spirits is determined not to let us plant paddy here. Let us try and find out who has made the trees that we have cut down stand upright and grow up again as before. My advice is that we cut down the jungle anew, and that some of us remain and keep watch here all night. Perhaps we may be able to catch the culprit."

So the brothers and all their friends and followers set to work, and before the day ended, they had cleared afresh a large stretch of jungle.

Twelve men, with *Bui-Nasi* at their head, were set to watch, and the others returned home, discussing among themselves what had taken place.

Those that were left by the clearing had not long to wait. Soon after dusk they saw a man come and standing on the trunk of a large felled tree, call aloud to the animals of the forest and the invisible spirits around in the name of *Rajah Shua* and *Seregendah* to come to his help. The twelve men crept up cautiously behind him and seized him.

"We have you now," they said as they held him fast. "It is you who have caused us all the trouble of having to cut down this jungle for the second time. Now we intend to kill you, and you will not be able to play your tricks on us any more."

It was too dark to see who it was, and *Bui-Nasi* said, "Let us have a light and see what he is like. I am sure he must be as ugly as he is troublesome."

One of them fetched a light and to their great surprise they saw their prisoner was *Pulang-Gana*!

"So it is you *Pulang-Gana*!" said his brother in anger. "You are up to your old tricks again. You were too lazy to work before, and would not keep watch over our garden, and you left us without telling us where you were going. And now, after several years' absence, you come back and disturb us in our work, and by some means or other set up the trees we have had the trouble of cutting down. Though I am your brother I have no pity for you. As long as you are alive you will give us trouble, so we intend to kill you and be well rid of you."

He expected *Pulang-Gana* to be afraid of him and to plead for his life. But things were very much changed from the old days when *Pulang-Gana* was the despised youngest brother, beaten and scolded by the others. Now he was the son-in-law of the gods, and had *Rajah Shua* and *Seregendah* to help him, and he was not at all afraid of his brothers, because he knew well they could do him no harm.

He shook off those that held him, and told them to listen to what he had to say. His manner and bearing were very different from that of one who feared them. They stood round him in awe, for they instinctively felt that *Pulang-Gana* was not to be trifled with, and from what had already taken place, they knew that he was aided by powerful spirits.

Then *Pulang-Gana* spoke :

"I have good reason for doing what I did. You have no right to cut down this jungle or to plant on this land. You have not paid me the price of the land. Not long ago, you, *Bui-Nasi*, gave me a clod of earth as my share of the property of our father, and so I have now the right of preventing any from planting on the earth. It is no use your attempting to kill me. Though you are many in numbers, it is impossible for you to kill me because I am now the god of the earth, and am assisted by *Rajah Shua* and *Seregendah* whose power you know."

There was silence for a short time, and then *Bai-Nasi* said, "No doubt what you say is true, for no one without supernatural aide have could made the trees that were cut down stand upright and grow. What do you wish us to do in order to obtain your leave to plant on the land?"

Pulang-Gana told them to gather all the people together the next day and he would tell them what all must do in order to insure their getting good crops of paddy.

That same night messengers were sent in all directions to tell the people in the neighbouring villages to come together so that *Pulang-Gana* might teach them what they were to do before cutting down the jungle and planting paddy.

The next morning a very large crowd gathered together and *Pulang-Gana* said to them :

"You must, before cutting down the jungle, make invocations to me, as well as to *Rajah Shua* and *Seregendah*, and you must ask me for leave to plant on the piece of land you have decided on, and you must make sacrifices to me of two kinds, some animal—a pig or a fowl—must be killed, and also there must be some offering of food—rice, or eggs, or potatoes, or fruit. Then some offering must be taken and buried in the ground to be planted. That is the rent you pay to me for the use of the land that year, for all the land belongs to me and I expect rent to be paid by all who use it.

"And if anything goes wrong in your paddy fields, and the crops are poor, or, being good, are attacked by insects or

animals, then you must call upon *Rajah Shua* and *Seregendah* and myself to come to your aid, and we will help you."

And then for the first time did the new ceremonies come into force, and, aided by the higher powers, mankind were able to obtain much better crops than they had done before. And this is why no Dyak dares to plant paddy without first making invocations and offerings to *Pulang-Gana*, *Rajah Shua* and *Seregendah* and also burying some small gift in the earth for the use of the land that year.